

The President. Well, I know that it couldn't come soon enough for me. And this whole business about weapons decommissioning is, obviously, critical to the completion of the process. And we here in the United States have reached out not only to Sinn Fein but also to the Unionists. The Prime Minister has pointed that out. The Vice President and my National Security Adviser have, on more than one occasion, tried to establish contacts to make sure we were reaching out to everyone in Northern Ireland.

And the important thing to me is that we keep pushing this process and keep it going in the right direction. And I have every confidence that that will occur.

Wolf [Wolf Blitzer, Cable News Network].

Russia

Q. Mr. President, President Yeltsin announced that he's willing to eliminate military hardware from his V-E parade on May 9th in order to encourage you to join others in Moscow to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. Is that enough to encourage you to go to Moscow, and will you include a trip to Ireland after that? [Laughter]

The President. Well, I appreciate what President Yeltsin said today. And I expect to be mak-

ing a decision about that whole set of issues very shortly. And when I do, I'll announce it.

Q. Mr. President, is Chechnya the stumbling block?

Northern Ireland Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, What pressures can the U.S. administration bring on Sinn Fein, particularly in regards to the decommissioning of arms? And was there a quid pro quo in that area for your granting a visa to Gerry Adams to fundraise in the United States?

The President. Well, certainly his prompt statement about the willingness of Sinn Fein to discuss arms decommissioning had an influence on my decision. I think it's important that the United States take some steps along the way, as the Prime Minister has said, to keep this process going. When others take appropriate steps, I think it makes it a lot easier for us to do the same thing.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Fein.

Memorandum on Federal Employees Affected by California Floods March 17, 1995

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Excused Absence for Employees Affected by Widespread Flooding in California

I am deeply concerned about the devastating losses caused by widespread flooding in California and the impact on the well-being and livelihood of our fellow Americans who have been affected by this disaster. Many parts of the Federal Government have been mobilized to respond to this disaster.

As part of this effort, I request heads of executive departments and agencies who have Fed-

eral civilian employees in the areas designated as disaster areas because of the flooding to use their discretion to excuse from duty, without charge to leave or loss of pay, any such employee who is faced with a personal emergency because of the flooding and who can be spared from his or her usual responsibilities. This policy should also be applied to any employee who is needed for emergency law enforcement, relief, or clean-up efforts authorized by Federal, State, or local officials having jurisdiction.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Remarks to the 1994 National Hockey League Champion
New York Rangers
March 17, 1995

Good afternoon. Please be seated. I'm delighted to see all of you here, and welcome to the White House and to the Rose Garden. You come on the first day that the trees are blooming, so you're bringing us all wonderful weather.

It's an honor for me to host the New York Rangers here, including the commissioner of the National Hockey League, Gary Bettman; the president and general manager of the Rangers, Neil Smith; coach Colin Campbell; and assistant coach Dick Todd. And I think Congressman Eliot Engel was supposed to be here, and he is unless they're still voting.

It was last June 14th when the Rangers won the Stanley Cup, finally breaking the infamous curse. The next day I got a letter from Senator Moynihan, a big Ranger fan, who said that since the Rangers brought the cup back to Madison Square Garden, I should bring the Rangers to the Rose Garden. I'm delighted you're finally here. We've been trying to arrange this visit for some time, but what's a few months compared to 54 years? [*Laughter*]

I can't tell you how much I personally enjoyed the playoffs. I really got into them. I tried to rearrange my schedule so that I could see the games. I enjoyed seeing Mark Messier predicting and delivering a victory when your backs were against the wall. I enjoyed Brian Leetch's MVP playoff performance, the first by an American-born player. And I especially enjoyed your goalie Mike Richter's acrobatic saves. All of us here in Washington can appreciate what goalies do because we have so many shots taken at us every day. And I was hoping maybe, in addition to a jersey, one of you could loan me a face mask for the next year or so. [*Laughter*]

I also want to say something that I observed watching these playoffs. Stars alone don't win

championships; teams do. I remember your chant from last year, "Heave ho. Everybody pulling together." This year it's turned into "Heave ho. Two in a row."

The Stanley Cup is the oldest trophy competition by professional athletes in North America, the only trophy that bears the names of not only the teams but the individual players who won it. I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation because the Rangers boast the first four Russians ever to have their names engraved on the Stanley Cup, another sign of our increasingly interconnected global community and America's outreach to the rest of the world.

I also admire the tradition that the entire team shares the Stanley Cup. Each player gets to take it home to friends and to family. This team took that one step further, because the Rangers know that teamwork isn't only about the guys who lace up the skates, it's also about your fans, too. And if ever a team had great fans, you do. So you paid your fans back by remembering right after the victory a longtime fan who had passed away, by bringing the cup to sick children in the hospital and even by bringing the cup to restaurants and bars throughout New York—[*laughter*—as well as to one of the Vice President's favorite hangouts, the David Letterman show.

For all that, I thank you. Your victory has shown us what is best about professional sports: perseverance, hard work, real commitment to working together. It's an example for which all of us in Madison Square Garden and the Rose Garden are very grateful.

Congratulations, and welcome again.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:39 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.